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STARS AND FISHES

STARS AND FISHES
AND OTHER POEMS BY
GEORGE ROSTREVOR

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STARS AND FISHES





DEDICATORY

*Go, little book, and take to her
Rich praise from me, her worshipper.
Haste, be thou called my Thurifer.*

*Go, little book, and crave of her
Remembrance, and this title bear—
Her Grace's liege Remembrancer.*

CREATION

I SAW in perfect quietude
The morning light begin,
And Nature flowing forth from God
Without the stain of sin.

I saw, the fresh wind folding her,
My own fair lady rise
To stature of supreme delight
Below the crowning skies.

I heard the newborn sea, I heard
The sky, the wind, the sod
Praising my lady ; and I heard
My lady praising God.

INTIMA

WHEN she sleeps, beneath each lid
Worlds of treasure do lie hid :
When she wakes, beneath each eye
Rarer treasures still do lie.

When she's silent, lovely sound
Underneath her lips is bound ;
When she speaks, behind each word
Lovelier music lies unheard.

Whether she do wake or sleep,
Say fair words or silence keep,
She doth rule with equal sway
Sound and silence, night and day.

STARS AND FISHES

WE lay upon a cliff. The sky
Was blue as it could be,
And one great lapis lazuli
Below us loomed the sea.

The world was lazy up above
And lazy down below,
And lazy as a cooing dove
Was my own fancy's flow. . . .

I slipped, and through a hidden door
Into an inner room
Of my own self I fell—the floor
Was blue, and blue the dome.

A beehive of blue sky around !
Below, a crystal sea !

My lungs and lips and limbs were bound,
But yet I felt me free.

I thought "A thousand great stars swing
In that blue dome above,
A thousand fish are flickering
Down in the coral grove."

And suddenly I laughed amain
And broke into a dance,
And came up through the door again
And woke me from my trance.

My solemn friend unknowing was.
He looked me in the eye,
But found it still as lazy as
The lazy sea and sky.

THE AGE OF LOVE

O H ! who shall guess Love's mystic age ?
Serene he is, yet wild,
Both solemn as a white-haired sage,
And simple as a child.

FUGUE

CONTINENTS of fire and unimagined oceans
Thrown to swing like silver dust through the wine-dark
ether,
Universe aflash with God's magnificent emotions,
With God's kiss upon her forehead and His girdling arms
beneath her.

Multitudinously flash the immutable silver dances,
Breaking up the dark of heaven in tantalizing mazes,
While the planets flicker by and scatter saucy glances,
While the young stars answer, burningly, with solemn gazes.

Twinkles there, her tawny sand embraced by silver waters,
Tiny Earth, her winds a-whisper—those old amorous rovers :
Little peaks and valleys with their shining river-daughters
Joining hands and joining laughter, singing to mad lovers.

Continents of fire and unimagined oceans
Breaking up the dark of heaven in tantalizing mazes,

Universe aflash with God's magnificent emotions—

How the young stars woo the planets with their solemn
gazes !

Swings, a speck of silver dust through the wine-dark ether,

Tiny Earth, her winds a-whisper—those old amorous
rovers—

With God's kiss upon her forehead and His girdling arms
beneath her,

Joining laughter with the starlight, singing to mad lovers.

LOVE AND SPRING

THE Spirit who doth ripen Spring
Hath filled my lady's eyes
With looks of modest questioning
And buds of sweet surprise.

O, who shall see this marvel, and
O, when shall be the hour?—
For one day shall each bud expand
To be a joyous flower.

O, who shall give the true, the sweet,
The quickening replies?
O, who of all men shall be meet
For Love's fair ministries?

O Love, true Love, an't be thy will,
Myself will go to her,
Thy harp, lute, voice, and oracle,
Thy slave, thy minister.

“I HAVE OFTEN HEARD THE STARS ”

I HAVE often heard the stars
Laughing in the night,
And the little planet Mars
Beating from his silver bars
Musical delight.

But I never hear them weep,
Though in tears I lie :
Laughing loud and laughing deep,
Laughing high and low they leap
Through the liquid sky.

Earth alone, oh ! Earth alone
Weeps upon her way.
All the others, cold as stone,
Never do they weep or moan,
Only pipe and play.

APHRODITE

APHRODITE from the sea
One fresh morning came to me,
Wearing the sunshine like a dress
About her lovely nakedness.

Ocean dewdrops in her hair
Sparkled, well contented there :
Or trickled down her, like a chain
Of pearls dissolvèd into rain.

With a laugh she came and went,
Leaving me a malcontent.
O Aphrodite from the sea,
Beshrew thee for this mockery !

AFTER A SOFT MUSIC

MAKE no noise ; the hushèd air
Still is holy with the death
Of frail music : draw your breath,
Reverent, at the sepulchre.

Now were even praise unmeet :
Quiet voices have gone hence
With a babe's dear innocence ;
Silence be their winding-sheet.

ST CUPID

(A PHILOSOPHY)

NAUGHTY Cupid, so I think,
Cupid, that unaging child,
Saw the little baby Christ
With His Virgin-Mother mild.

Sooth, he so amazèd was
For a while his mischief fled,
And he dropped his little bow
And devoutly worshippèd :

Then half smiling, half ashamed,
Took the bow and stole away—
But the worship still doth mix,
Willy-nilly, in his play.

JEWELS

LOVER of all bright things is she,
And they in her delight ;
For bright things in her company
Are made more passing bright.

Her love of them no envy mars,
She is not like the sun :
Who quenches all his jewelled stars
For envy of each one.

But rather like the moon is she,
Clad in the starry night ;
She has no need of jealousy,
She wears her jewels bright.

A CRY FROM THE TOWN

MY heart cried out from amid the strife
And bustle of this drab life,
My heart cried out from the weary gloom
Of my paper-littered room.
Thank God, it cried, that there is yet
Such a thing as a violet,
Thank God, it cried, that there is still
Such a thing as a daffodil !

THE PEDLAR

PLAIN and broidered stuffs I bring
For thy choice apparelling ;
Silk and velvet, gauze and lace
Shall conspire to do thee grace.

Here before thee do I set,
First, a velvet black as jet ;
From whose darkness thou shalt glow
Rosy as dawn, virgin as snow.

Here is satin, palish blue,
Delicate-woven, soft of hue,
Whose free flowings shall comply
Thy fair body feateously.

Last, a gauzy primrose dress
Fit for thee, thou Spring-Goddéss !

When thou wear'st it, beauty shall
From thee like a perfume fall.

With thy lover's eyes I see ;
Buy then, lady, buy from me !
For I know which best will please,
These, and these, and these, and these.

AN INVITATION THAT LOVERS
SHOULD DO HOMAGE AT
THE CRADLE-THRONE

HERE at the levée of the Prince of Love,
Bow, ye true lovers, bow your blushing heads,
And when ye hence depart, nail up above
The happy Cupids of your bridal beds
Some picture of this Potentate, this King,
This God, this Love, this Babe, this Frail, this Mighty
Thing.

TREASURE

O LORD, I love my little field,
A flowery harvest that doth yield :
I love my orchard and my pool,
Well shaded by the willows cool.

And, Lord, this truly I confess,
That I do shun the wilderness :
For though Thy presence there should be,
I'd miss my field and flower and tree.

Then teach me, Lord, for fear lest sin
At my two eyes should enter in,
To see these treasures from Thy hand
Quite pure and fresh, as they were planned.

Quite pure and fresh and full of Thee
That so my spirit may have glee,
Advancèd to Thy worship by
This exultation of mine eye.

HOLY DAY

WITH busy pain have I shut out
The shining Paradise,
Whose meadows compass me about
And gardens of sweet spice.

And She, the Lady of my Prayer,
The Mistress of my Heart,
She stands a little wistful there,
Among the flowers, apart.

But now my heart shall open wide,
And into it shall flow
The garden-sweets from every side,
And myrrh and civet too.

Mid ranks of flowers I'll stay with Her,
The best to smell or see,
The lily and the lavender,
The rose, the rosemary.

BEFORE THE CRADLE

COME, ye Three, and each one bring
Some dearworthy offering !

Poesy, in phrasing meet
Homage do before His feet ;
Most reverently setting down
Thy thorn-and-laurel-woven crown.

Musick, in sweet noises swing
The small cradle of thy King ;
And interfusèd let there be .
Some triumph and solemnity.

Picture, let thy rainbows fall
Bright upon the manger-wall ;
Yet join the fair and dreadful hue
Of Death with Heaven's unstainèd blue.

Come, ye Three, and each one bring
Some dearworthy offering.

BEFORE THE CROSS

COME, ye Three, here see your King
His last woe accomplishing.

Poesy, once more unbind
Thy sad laurels : see entwined
On His white brow, so marred and torn,
The sanguine-splendid crown of thorn.

Musick, hark thou not alone
To His sad, His solemn tone ;
Hear too His chorded triumph quell
The rageful dissonance of Hell.

Picture, look beyond the cloud
Dark as any night, or shroud :
Thou'lt see the pearl of Heaven's gate,
Flung open wide, this King await.

Come, ye Three, here see your King
His last woe accomplishing.

THE VIOLIN

PRESSING down thy pretty chin,
Maiden, to the violin,
Swaying to its note of joy
Sympathetically coy !

Well thou knowest how to teach
The violin thy native speech—
Speech of maidenly delight
Is thine own by surest right.

Rueful now, with gaze intent
On thy task of music bent,
Drawing out—again, again—
Bitter, sobbing notes of pain !

This sad weeping, I divine,
Is the violin's, not thine :
And, I think me, thou in turn
To be sorrowful dost learn.

COUNTRY WAYS

YOU with your country ways,
O, you are fresh to me
After my dull town days
As no town maid could be—
You with your country ways !

You with your country ways,
The thought of you turns sweet
Even the dismal greys
Of the undelighting street—
You with your country ways.

You with your country ways,
An echo of your voice
From a far-off garden strays,
Bidding my soul rejoice—
And I *will* rejoice—
In you with your country ways !

BODILY BEAUTY

HER curving bosom images
A tender-folded thought :
Whose grace, too exquisite for speech,
Was in her body wrought.

The shining vale between her breasts
Is like a quiet joy,
Such as no malison can harm
Nor any shade annoy.

Yea, all her bodily beauty is
A subtle-fashioned scroll,
Where God has written visibly
Brave hintings of her soul.

DEWFALL

SOFTER than dew on happy grass
Her words upon me fall,
Each tone a tone of melody,
Each sentence musical.

Like pauses in grave music are
Her silences between,
Charged with the singing memory
Of sweet things that have been.

Tuned to a single harmony
Her sound, her silence meet :
There falls a rustling robe of dew
Down to her shining feet.

REVENUE

OUT in the meadow every year,
At coming of the spring,
My revenue of buttercups
I go a-gathering.

My tax of golden buttercups—
I'm wealthier than a king—
My golden, golden buttercups
At coming of the spring.

APPEAL TO VENUS

GODDESS-QUEEN of dear delight,
With this grievance do I come—
Cupid, first who gave me sight,
Mocking me hath made me dumb.

Teach me, then, thy language fair,
And I vow that when I sing
To my lady, thou shalt share
In the lovely offering.

A DEFIANCE

LAST night, before the rain came down,
I heard the clouds conspire
Most utterly to quench and drown
The Earth's awaking fire :
For 'twas the very eve of Spring,
The dream before th' awakening.

Fair morning broke : the Sun and I
Looked out, Earth's fate to know—
When lo ! a mirthful mockery,
A pretty scorn, for lo !
Along my garden at each turn
We saw gold crocus flame and burn.

NOCTURNE

1st Spirit. Night with her starlight bunches of sweet bloom,

2nd Spirit. Night the cool-handed hover in your room :

Both. And fold you tenderly in shadows of soft gloom.

1st Spirit. Night smooth the pillow for your drooping head,

2nd Spirit. Night breathe a holy fragrance by your bed ;

Both. And drowsiness like dripping dew upon you shed.

1st Spirit. Night bless the happy sheets where you do lie,

2nd Spirit. Night croon you quiet songs for lullaby ;

Both. And shepherd your white dreams by waters of the sky.



THE UNATTAINABLE

*" 'Tis to have drunk too well
The drink that is divine
Maketh the kind earth waste."*

FRANCIS THOMPSON

BECAUSE you were
Immoderately beautiful, and made
The sun's superb light by comparison a shade ;

Because you were
Miraculously beautiful, and left
The miracle-teeming world of miracle bereft ;

Because with one dim-comprehended word
You made all solemn, loud, clear harmonies unheard—

Therefore must I unprofitably stray,
Wonderless, sightless, deaf, dark in this noon of day.

ADVENT

HIS sanguine brow shall dominate the North,
His piercèd feet the South incarnadine,
And East and West His torn hands travel forth
Far as the uttermost untracked lightnings shine.

THE ORACLE

LO ! all my being is a darkened lake,
Soundless and shivering. The song-birds shun
Even its borders. Will the gold dawn break
Upon me ?—soon ?

Yea, soon, yea, very soon—
When God shall dark the blazing of the sun
And quench the last pale flicker of the moon.

GHOSTS

DUMB twilight's here, and white-winged moths,
Begin to flutter to and fro ;
To-day is buried with the days
Of long ago.

The twilight broods upon my soul,
I feel the flutter of pale wings,
Ghosts of to-day's and yesterday's
Forgotten things.

LONELINESS

THE ocean shuddered in silence, the stars shone chilly
and clear :

Forest and mountain and valley lay hush'd in the shadow of
fear.

Oh for the sound of a voice from far or near !

I spoke. I shattered the silence. It closed in again—so still,
Not even an echo would answer, from forest or valley or hill.

Only the shadow of fear, and the starlight chill.

I fled from myself, but I found my same self everywhere.

As in the heart of me, in the heart of the world lay fear ;

And never the sound of a voice from far or near.

AURORA

(AN INTERPRETATION OF SIR E. BURNE-JONES' PICTURE)

SHE steps a-tiptoe round the battlements,
Grey, and the sky still grey,
With delicate clash of cymbals heralding
The fiery march of day.

Surely the cymbal is at strife with her—
Her smooth locks, her quaint dress,
Her dainty treading, her large dovelike eyes,
Her girlish tenderness.

She hears not her own music—'tis a dream,
Far off, not understood—
Unconscious herald of the wild sweet clash
Of her own womanhood.

UNDER WATERLOO BRIDGE

THERE on the lowest of the reeking steps
In the moist shadow of the arch all day—
Where busy men and heedless women pass
And children shout and play—

She sits bent, old and feeble. Her poor eyes
Gaze straight ahead of her. Dimly she sees.
All day she holds her tray of matchboxes,
Listless, upon her knees.

Once she was brave and discontented—now
Her mind's too paralysed for discontent,
Too dull to be unquiet, poor old dear,
Feeble and old and bent.

DESOLATE

WHEN the small new moon does be shining
From heaven's dark roof above,
Himself his strong arms would be twining
About me, an' telling o' love.

To listen, an' lie there securely,
No fear o' the cold or dark,
We'd slumber a brief while surely
An' wake wi' the first-winged lark.

But now the sad years have destroyed me,
It's little of comfort have I
To tell o' the loving that joyed me
In a day that is long gone by.

He's built a fine cottage in-under
The sheltering brow o' the hill,
But, oh, for his arms and the thunder,
The rain, and him kissing me still !

Ohone ! the moon does be shining
From heaven's dark roof above,
But it's weary me heart is wi' pining
For lack o' his masterfu' love.

PEGEEN'S WORLD

PEGEEN stands at the cottage door—
The great stars shine in the sky above—
Her mother's cottage is mean and poor.

Pegeen looks out into the night—
The great stars shine in the sky above—
And sees three windows twinkling bright.

The cottage where Kate O'Reilly sits—
The great stars shine in the sky above—
And rails at her brats, the while she knits :

The cottage where Shawn and Seumas tell—
The great stars shine in the sky above—
Of what they saw and what befell :

The cottage where Dick and his new-wed wife—

The great stars shine in the sky above—

And cattle and pigs are settled for life.

* * * * *

Pegeen's face is the face of a queen—

The great stars shine in the sky above—

And this is her world—O poor Pegeen !

TOT MILLIA FORMOSARUM

I KNEW a man when he had seen
A lovely face would say, "The Queen
Of Beauty has ten hundred score
Of Maids of Honour—maybe more.

Yet each one has a beauty such
As countless rivals could not dull,
And *this* one praised her Maker's touch—
God bless her ! she was beautiful."

THE WITHERED ROSE

MAGICIAN, cast
Thy dreamlights hovering
To sway and swing
Before the brightening mazes of the past.
Oh, grant me sight again
Of the blood-red rose, who shed
Her beauty down in rain
Of weeping sore
And many-petalled pain,
And fled
This tyranny of Time—
Set in a fairer clime,
No more, oh, never more
To wither in the violating blast
Or to the burning core
Be numbed with cruel rime !

SYMBOL

A CARPET of pale light beneath
Her feet I spread ;
A circlet of undarkened stars
Above her head.

For robe to her I wove the dim
Blue veils of night :
Her moon-white body through them shone
Mystical bright.

Thus strove I in a dreaming thought
Fair to express
With symbols from the night her soul's
High stateliness.

QUIA IMPOSSIBILE

I BURN with conquering love for thee,
Most humble and most passionate ;
This passion, this humility
Sceptre me lord of Fate.

Silver of stars may be thy crown,
Silver of moons may deck thy feet ;
Yet my right hand shall pluck thee down
Until our red lips meet.

Vain for thy sole blue skies to yearn
Or virgin-silver diadem ;
Thy wings to Heaven shall not return,
Save my feet follow them.

AT THE SHRINE OF HER BEAUTY

TOO stainèd am I, thou beautiful Soul
Of my Belovèd.

God purify

My stainèd soul for the beautiful Soul
Of my Belovèd.

O beautiful Face and beautiful Soul
Of my Belovèd—

God grant me grace

To dwell with thy beautiful Face and Soul
Always, Belovèd.

RESPITE

O H, that I might
Build in the memory a cool retreat,
Cool as the showered rain
Of dew, when pure and tranquil night
Washes away the stain
Of summer heat !

Bound
With a silver-subtle chain
Of sound
And starry light
And odours sweet,
Old joys that were too fleet
In wingèd flight
Should hover there unceasingly, and greet
With ever-old and ever-new delight,
Without one pang of pain,
My oft-returning feet.

Faint music should sing lullaby
Till in a trance
Of motionless repose
My weary eyes should close,
And wrapt in slumber all my body lie.

And then the twinkling dance
Of starry light should wake
The silver fires of vision in the lake
Of my deepest being,
And kindle them to seeing.
Again, again,
My waking soul should know
Her sudden joys long past !

Free at the last,
Free from the flow
Of the hurrying hours,
With quiet delight
Her feet would go :
Yea, as the moon
With silvery wings
Sails in the star-bright
Night, and rejoices,

So in those bowers
Of old delight
The silvery shoon
Of my soul would tread ;
And all the voices
Of lovely things,
Forgotten and dead,
Showers of bliss
Undying would shed,
Kiss after kiss,
On her parchèd lips.

Sweetly as drips
Slow rain to the roots
Of withering flowers,
And steals to the tips
Of their delicate shoots,
So sweetly those showers
Of murmuring voices
Would shed their dew ;
The past would leap,
Would joyfully leap,
To birth anew—

Shake off the clogging dust, and spring,
A lovely, an immortal thing,
From the shadows deep
Of its winter sleep
To light and life unwithering.

ABSENCE

THOU strange, compassionate power of Absence, draw
The spell more close about my dear and me,
That under strong compulsion of the law
Of masterful Love, though sundered bodily—
Broken the mutual bondage of embrace
And snapped apart the subtle thread of speech—
We two may mock that insolent frontier Space,
And my soul her soul's citadel may reach.

Brave thoughts, ye thrust upon me overmuch
Your high exalted honour. I am weak
With strength of mortal longing, fain would seek
The sacraments of sight and sound and touch.
O insolent Space, I yield ; restore to me
Here, one brief hour, my flown felicity.

SIMPLICITY

HER eyes are but the centre whence
In lucid darkness round her flow
Wide heavens of starry innocence.

Her eyelids on those heavens show
Like little dusky moons ; the night
Glowes shadowy with dreamed delight.

Simple is she, and has no care
With silk or satin or sweet scent
To emphasize that she is fair :

What need has she of ornament,
When gathered round about her are
Boundless sky and moon and star ?

MAID KATHARINE

HERE in the faint, the toiling fever-time,
When sun-dazed flowers sorrowfully die,
I find her sister where the cool
Sweet shadows lie.

I find her sister, where the dark night falls,
In every meadow where the stars shine bright,
And where the Moon far scattereth
Her spears of light.

But when the waking skies are virgin-fresh
And thick dews twinkle on the untrod lawn,
I find her self, her very self—
At dove-grey dawn.

HER PRESENCE

HER presence pure is like the cool sweet shade
At noon, in a glade :

Like holy twilight, when no bold winds dare
To ruffle the air :

Like moon- and star-light on a tired world cast,
When toiling is past :

But most like dawn, waking with grey eyes pure,
.Meek, quiet, demure.

TRANQUILLITY

WHEN She whose eyes do most astonish Day
Seals up their splendour under her white lids,
I know that her serene composure bids
My passionate heart its tumult to allay :
And when, at dawn, those ivory lids unclose
Their locked-up lightnings, deep below them lie,
Safe from all storm, serene perpetually,
The levels of inviolate repose.

Unknowing teacher, whose fair influence
Makes emulous my love, and stings my shame,
Floods with cool-founted ecstasy my sense,
Both kindles and controls my spirit's flame—
Her quiet ardours prove to me from whence,
From what Divine Tranquillities, She came.

ENGLAND

THE face of his beloved with him goes,
A vision mid the sounding guns, a light
Burning unquenchably from dull grey dawn
Through the stern hours to night.

Then sweeter, holier, when slumber falls
And Death is blotted out, her image lies
Graven on his brief dreams with folded hands
And still, eternal eyes.

OXFORD

(IN HONOUR OF HER ABSENT SONS, 1916)

NOW is the Dreaming City sunk in sleep
Below the level of dream. Her body lies
Quiet and beautiful as Death. O, weep
For the old world faded from her close-shut eyes.

Nay, weep not. She leaves nothing to lament.
Her spirit disembodied is made free
Of the wide spaces of the firmament,
Of the long sweep of centuries to be.

A CROSS IN FLANDERS

IN the face of death, they say, he joked—he had no fear :
His comrades, when they laid him in a Flanders grave,
Wrote on the rough-hewn cross—a Calvary stood near—
“ Without a fear he gave

His life, cheering his men, with laughter on his lips.”

So wrote they, mourning him. Yet was there only one
Who fully understood his laughter, his gay quips,
She only, she alone—

She who, not so long since, when love was new-confessed,
Herself toyed with light laughter while her eyes were dim,
And jested, while with reverence despite her jest
She worshipped God and him.

She knew—O Love, O Death—his soul had been at grips
With the most solemn things. For *she*, was *she* not dear ?
Yes, he was brave, most brave, with laughter on his lips,
The braver for his fear !

THE DREAMER

(IN MEMORY OF W. S. E.)

HE was a dreamer : dreams had tormented him
Even from early boyhood, while his longing grew
To sing " Let there be light," and out of chaos dim
Create the world anew.

His labouring mind was restless, dark with discontent—
So narrow, fitted for their narrow task, men seemed,
While he, who dreamed the truth, found he was impotent
To fashion as he dreamed.

But War its flaming summons over the world shook,
And narrow hearts grew big and light to dull eyes came ;
And he forgot his mood, and in one hour forsook
The suit of lonely fame.

He fell with stern-shut lips, his *fiat lux* unsung,
Numbered—what matters it ?—one of a multitude—
A hero in a host heroic, dying young,
His proud soul unsubdued.

A SOLDIER'S PORTRAIT

(To F.)

ONE who has met with fear, and conquered it ; with pain,
And gladly suffered it : who's faced out every chance :
Who enters battle cool and strong, with a clear brain,
Having tasted in advance

His own death and his friends' death. One who loves life
well ;

To whom the thought of home—the mere familiar thought—
Is martial music mid the blinding shot and shell
Of the fiercest battle fought.

A soldier, with a soldier's loyal faith ; who sees

God still the same when the swords of the world are bared ;
And waits with firm assurance His dark-hid decrees,
Resolute, serene, prepared.

MAGNITUDES

THOUGH upward from my little-centred self
My little gaze I turn,
And through the fevered forehead of the sky
Watch the planets throb and burn,

Steadfast, tremendous, multitudinous,
From aching pole to pole—
How should I faint before the finite stars,
I that am a deathless soul ?

AN IMPERIAL SICKBED

SHE who, in Belgium's anguish, bowing her fair head,
Pleaded with thee in vain—
Even the lady Pity has no tear to shed,
Watching thy lonely pain.

More terrible than Vengeance, with unheeding eyes
Over thy bed She stands,
Indifferent—terrible and tranquil as blue skies
Seen above plundered lands.

THE HERO

O STRANGER, if you knew
The high and noble thing this dull man did,
You would not scorn him so.

But from the idle view
Of busy mockers all his life is hid.
Stranger, you cannot know.

THE SOLDIER'S MOTHER

WHEN I looked out from the window,
Till a few weeks ago,
I saw no sight but the valley
And the stream that runs below.

The stream and the winding pathway
My old feet know so well,
The pathway and the cottage
Where Jane and her husband dwell.

But ever since last September
The eyes grow dim in my head,
My little world is broken,
And I am full of dread.

When I look out from the window,
The great stars reel and dance—
I see the heavens opened
On the fierce fields of France.

MOTHERHOOD

PROUD in thy uttermost abandonment
Of motherly self-surrender, thou dost give
Thy bosom to the new-born innocent
That he may suck, and drink thy life, and live.
Thou art all his : by sacramental bond
Thy life, love, grace, compassion are his food,
And that most wonderful beauty set beyond
Our comprehension, thy strong womanhood.

So England, squandering lavishly her dower
To raise her child, the England that shall be,
Sublime from this uncovenanted hour,
Firm and strong-hearted, beautiful and free—
Unbosoms all her tenderness, beauty, power,
Dominion, honour, love, grace, majesty.

CHRISTMAS IN BELGIUM

(1914)

THE vision of the Babe, the Prince of Peace,
This Christmas in a ruined homestead born
In a most desolate fire-swept land forlorn,
Mid sound of War and weeping without cease.
Lo, there the star of His epiphany
Beckons and gleams. Gifts of uncounted price,
Unconscious, counting but the sacrifice,
The Nations bring for His Nativity.

Deep ranks of Cherubim and Seraphim
Flame-sworded chant their carol "Peace on Earth."
(Poor human eyes, with watch or weeping dim,
How may ye mark this advent of sweet mirth?)
"Look up, ye desolate places, laugh and sing.
War dies. War dies. War dies. The Lord is King."

ANZAC

THEY who sprang up from fair Australia's soil
Lie in foul dust beneath an alien sky ;
They who sprang up dreaming of victory
Hold this one plot for meed of their much toil :

Yet no disaster may their destiny foil,
Nor any doom, though dust to dust they lie
In dust of alien Gallipoli,
Their bones of fitting burial despoil.

Surely one empire were too strait a bound
For the dominion of their burial-ground.
They have outgrown her. These her children brave
Have all the borders of the world for grave :
For these Earth is not parcelled out—for these
She keeps no frontier-lines nor sundering seas.

AT THE LAST

SWEET to the wanderer,
Wandering over,
The slumber too deep
For a dream to stir it.

Sweet to the warrior,
Warfare done,
His Lady of Peace
With her quiet bosom.

FOR DESIRE OF THE MORROW

THE stars were very faint and far,
Were far to weary eyes, I deem :
The eyes of Earth were almost shut
In a solemn dream.

Sweet sang the stars in unison ;
In music broken-sweet replied
Faint-dreaming Earth, for War well-nigh
From her soul had died.

And all her singing was a dream,
And all her dreaming was a song,
And all her theme the far-off bliss
Of awaking strong :

When raving and tempestuous War
For ever shall be trampled out—
When like a silver star her soul
Shall arise and shout.

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